

CHAPTER 2

BODIES AND BOUNDARIES

MORITZ PEDRINI: THE IMMUNITY REDUCTION OF OPPRESSED PEOPLE³²

In the beginning, in the whole first phase of coping almost with a shock, I was with Doctor X who had just opened his practice. And that was always very nice. He was very sensitive and so he became our family doctor. Then, when I realized that I am actually not doing badly and when I saw that I should do something to do even better, I chose to do everything I heard of. First it was homeopathy with an iridologist, that means he makes his diagnosis by looking at the iris. He right away gave me a lot of homeopathic globule and they helped me remarkably. I developed a very good feeling for my body, and I could – as I remember – bike again with pleasure and so on. And then I heard that the anthroposophists could enhance immunity in cancer mainly with *Isador*, a mistletoe drug, also a homeopathic thing. I think it is mainly a drug against cancer which can also partly be explained through immunity reduction. So I went and was passed on to a Doctor Y who right away said: yes, we do have some experience with it. And ever since – that was maybe eight, no, seven years ago – I always regularly injected it twice a week, with short breaks, once I paused for a month and a half. That was mistletoe, and a few other things. (...). And then some time ago, maybe two years ago, I realized that the *Roche*-drug *Berocca* is very good for me. Not taking very much of it, not regularly at all, let's say twice or three times a week half a tablet, that's really not much. And then I realized that half an Aspirin helped when I for example didn't sleep well. And very often I felt I had to take a vitamin combination. I suspect that this vitamin combination has always had such a clear effect on me, already for 20 or 25 years, especially on days when I have to assert myself in my work, it makes me capable in a good way and I am absolutely in best shape, I believe it could be because it contains iodide. That's my lay opinion, because this iodide is not found in most other drugs. (...). Further approaches were following more the psychological side. First of all, I realized that it is very important to me to work along the lines pursued by my two rather long-lasting psychotherapies, analytical therapies. And now, a bit more than a year ago, in spring a year ago, I went to an analyst I already knew and already had a good understanding with, and I started therapy with him, about once a week or every two weeks, and that lasted for almost a year. But the essential problem treated there

³² The narrative is – in contrast to the narratives introducing the following parts – barely revised by myself. Following an introductory question, Moritz Pedrini told his story as I reproduce it here (only omitting a few short passages), without being asked any further questions. He seemed to have the whole story already waiting in his mind. After the long narrative passage, the interview went on with further questions and answers.

was the problem of my relation with the school, my situation there and the whole background to this relation going back to my youth, my childhood. Somehow to look again how it developed, where I could try to omit the same reactions, where I could begin something new and much more differentiated. And that was very important since I realized that I longed to liberate myself from the school because my entry into the school did not happen under optimal circumstances. First of all, as a child I was not necessarily talented in painting, I had a strong idea of art and a desire, but the talent was not so clear. It was rather due to the circumstances that I eventually decided for art. And now it turned out that ever since my childhood there was a certain pressure that I should paint. Like many children who first under a certain pressure... – seen from the exterior, the pressure was not all that big, but there were always challenges and decisions: either you paint, or we stop the lessons. And in that way, the whole thing was a bit uneasy. That was the world of my mother anyway and I did not feel very comfortable about it. Well, the whole thing pointed towards a profession that I might not have chosen under very normal circumstances. I might have turned into a very interested amateur, I might have become an artist anyhow, that's not so clear, but in that case it would have been under different conditions, with more freedom, at least as I hope. But maybe that's all an illusion, too. But in any case I believe that remnants of this pressure have always been carried on from one situation to the other, without my ability to become fully aware of them or removing them. And so I understood now that I am very relieved because I can start to retire already. And what is interesting, the first consequence of my relief was that when I came to see you³³, to take blood tests, that they turned out quite worse than the ones just half a year before which were above 600, and then suddenly 360 or something, the helper cells I mean. And I actually felt well. It was only during the summer right after that, last summer, that so many duties had piled up again that I actually felt almost worse than ever before. I felt very old, felt I was trembling inside, and, sometimes, just very exhausted. But that summer the helper cells had climbed again above 400, around 450, and ever since one problem after the other gradually got resolved. First of all I had the exhibit, and I also held a speech that was appreciated. And now I have another exhibit that will cost me a lot of work, and I feel very well that it will mean the end of everything I *must* do. I will be able to freely decide absolutely every moment whether I work or not. (...). And for that reason my relationship with the school never was ideal, for the pressure hindered my artistic development and therefore I didn't get the response I imagined I should get to correspond to my artistic and pedagogical ideals. And now, with the retirement I now await calmly, and with the psychotherapy I recently finished, I feel that I will start a new phase in life in which for the first time there is nothing I have to do. And this often mainly means that I have the time to sleep when I am tired. (...). What I find very important is biking, going for a walk. I regularly need certain physical training tasks, and then I am – I have the feeling that I am also safe in relation to the infection. (...). I have, to resume the whole thing, I also have a comprehensive idea which in part is also critical of society. I think with some reservation it can generally be accepted. Through my sexual orientation I have the disposition to be opposed to the official, the conventional lifestyle. But also besides that I believe that I have enough reason to criticize the paternalistic orientation of our society. And that is something which seems very important to me. Now I have a purpose in the political, the artistic, and also in the pedagogical and the practical domain, since I will also keep on teaching, just not regularly anymore. The purpose to introduce everywhere the *weltanschauung* that you should not orient so much towards measurable values, that you should not demand results from people, but instead that the results are allowed to come by themselves

³³ He refers to his visit for our previous study on non-progression.

since they come much more easily that way. If you want to put it that way, to support people as people in a way that they themselves learn to enjoy the essence of art instead of first having to learn the artistic techniques as an end in themselves. These are things that have actually long been condemned but in practice they are still decisive. And that you do the same thing in politics, that's also an aim. And the conclusion for HIV – for the whole thing, for this situation as a social syndrome, you could almost say – that I come to is that HIV is actually a socially conditioned sickness, supported through the immunity reduction of oppressed people in an achievement-oriented world, and that's how it could spread. I think that in principle a person who can omit pressure, who can structure his life in a way that he doesn't feel alienated pressure anywhere, that he has a natural capacity to control the virus by himself. It is very interesting that while presently my duties at school come to an end I often forget to either inject *Isador* or to take my vitamins. And it is very interesting that for the first time in many years I have the feeling that I do not need the experience of homo-erotic sexuality. I suddenly have the feeling that I am a person who can work as an artist, who can think and do things also without a sexual experience. Until last year, until maybe a few months ago, I did not have this feeling, and I directly relate that to the hierarchic situation at school, to the contractual relationship and the very latent, but for a psychologically trained person who is fully aware of his unconscious, absolutely perceptible pressure from above.

Health has become a central element of personal identity³⁴ in modernity, and AIDS serves as the paradigmatic sickness to draw the line between the healthy and the polluted (Crawford 1994). A person who is sick has crossed a line that separates her from the healthy others. Identity-building along the lines of health may involve considerable efforts and difficulties already for the healthy ones, as Crawford (1985) vividly described for Americans. The question though receives a new urgency when one is becoming sick, and even more so when the sickness is as stigmatized as HIV/AIDS. While on the level of society, efforts are made to distance ourselves from sickness³⁵, the individual who is infected with HIV faces the question of how the self can be reconstructed with the virus already within the body, the boundaries of the body already violated. For people with HIV, the experience of infection centers around re-organizing the interface between self and society³⁶, and organizing the cohabitation with and control of the virus within the body.

³⁴ I agree with Bommers and Scherr in their (rather complicated) definition of identity: "'Identity' in our understanding stands for the need to claim both the continuity of the individual life history and the ability to meaningfully integrate the current individual life practice in the face of biographically and currently heterogeneous circumstances of life and demands on behavior. In that sense, identity is not a natural attribute of individuals, but stands for the attempt to behave towards oneself and the social circumstances of life in a way which allows perceiving the individual biography as continuous and the current life practice as coherent" (1991: 295).

³⁵ See Kopp (2002) for a review of how boundaries have been and currently are drawn between the healthy and the potentially sick.

³⁶ As Ariss and Dowsett noted: "Having HIV does not necessarily generate, in itself, a damaged sense of the self. Self is monitored in the context of social relationships" (1997: 56).

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